



STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
Department of Genetics

Dear Sarge [Shriver]

JUN 7 1972

Thank you for sending me the Zahn article on abortion. I am impressed also by a forthright statement of a position, on the "absolute right of every fertilized ovum to develop". He faces squarely a number of issues, like the implication that even a victim of rape should be denied an abortion, that are often glossed over by other anti-abortion debaters. (But I would put these few cases in the same category as the mentally defective infants: they test the rigor of one's propositions if one demands an absolute framework.)

I do find it necessary however to bring your attention to some still further implications of his position. As indicated in the attached draft (and let me apologize further, its residual polemical tone) I find it hard to reconcile "olympian silence" about the negligent loss of fertilized eggs (i.e. spontaneous abortions), however impaired, with the absolutist position that the intentional termination of similar entities (to say human beings is of course to beg the question) is akin to murder.

In any event my main purpose in responding to you is not an effort at persuasion about ethical theory. It is to bring some biological facts to your attention that have still to be incorporated into a self-consistent theory in defense of ova.

Sincerely

Joshua Lederberg